



NEWS RELEASE

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Nebraska Sees Improving Trends in Addressing Teacher Vacancies According to 2025-26 Survey Results

The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) has released the results of the 2025-26 Teacher Vacancy Survey, highlighting significant improvements in staffing stability and record-breaking participation from school systems across the state.

Participation in the annual survey reached an all-time high this year, with an 81.80% response rate from Public and nonpublic schools and the states Educational Service Units (ESU). A total of 355 out of 434 districts and systems shared their staffing data, a notable increase from the 71% participation rate (310 districts and systems) recorded in 2024.

While the educator shortage remains a priority, the 2025-26 data shows a downward trend in unfilled positions compared to the previous year:

- **Unfilled Positions:** Reported unfilled positions dropped to 489.70 in 2025, down from 669.35 in 2024.
- **Total Vacancies:** The number of positions left completely vacant also decreased. In 2025, 23% (111.40) of unfilled positions remained vacant, compared to 30% (200.65) in 2024.
- **Impacted Districts:** The number of districts reporting unfilled positions fell from 153 in 2024 to 135 this year.

Special Education continues to be the endorsement area with the highest need, representing 140 unfilled positions in 2025, a slight improvement from 149 in 2024. The top five areas of need for 2025 were rounded out by Elementary Education, Career Education, Science, and Mathematics.

The primary reason schools struggle to staff classrooms remains a lack of candidates. In 2025, 60% of districts reported "No applicants" as their main challenge, while 18% cited a lack of fully qualified applicants.

When positions cannot be filled with fully qualified personnel, the most frequent outcome in 2025 was leaving the position unfilled (20%), though this occurred less frequently than the 22% reported in 2024.

"The increase in survey participation gives us the most accurate picture to date of the workforce landscape in Nebraska," said Nebraska Commissioner of Education Brian Maher. "While it is encouraging to see the total number of unfilled positions and vacancies decreasing, we remain committed to supporting districts still facing these challenges".

In December, the State Board of Education approved the NDE's 5 year strategic plan which included a strategic priority to grow the educator pipeline. The board set a goal to cut the number of vacant teacher positions in half by 2030. To combat these shortages, Nebraska continues to leverage the Excellence in Teaching Act through the Nebraska Coordinating Council of Postsecondary Education, which provides forgivable loans to students and current teachers pursuing endorsements in high-

need areas. Additionally, the state has introduced alternative certification pathways and removed barriers such as the basic skills Praxis Core test to attract a wider pool of talent to the profession. The Department is also working with districts statewide in the teacher apprenticeship program, offering paraprofessionals a new pathway to become teachers.

The Nebraska Legislature also enacted two teacher grant programs. The Teacher Recruitment and Retention Act Program is focused on teachers with 2, 4, or 6 years of service, and teachers who obtain and teach in high need endorsement areas. The Teach in Nebraska Today Program began in the 2023-2024 school year and is aimed at attracting individuals interested in the teaching profession and support their employment as classroom teachers by offering a \$5,000 grant for their service within the state. A recent program evaluation survey showed 84% of participating teachers reported that the grant improved their financial stability and 82% of respondents indicating it influenced their decision to remain in the teaching profession in Nebraska. Furthermore, 85% of teachers reported that the grant made them feel more valued by the state.

The full 2025-26 report and historical comparisons can be found at: <https://www.education.ne.gov/educatorprep/teacher-shortage-survey/>.

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